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This study investigates the relation between Psychosocial Maturity and a dimension of moral judgment. Form D of the Psychosocial Maturity Inventory and Form B of the Survey of Ethical Attitudes (SEA) were administered to 182 tenth grade students. Predicted negative correlations between SEA and two Social Adequacy subscales were marginally significant for male students and not significant for female students. A previous finding, that SEA scores are curvilinearly related to maturity, was not supported. Implications of the findings for developmental models of moral development are discussed. (Author)

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PSYCHOSOCIAL MATURITY AND A DIMENSION OF MORAL JUDGMENT

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THE JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY

BALTIMORE, MARYLAND

Introductory Statement

The Center for Social Organization of Schools has two primary objectives: to develop a scientific knowledge of how schools affect their students, and to use this knowledge to develop better school practices and organization.

The Center works through three programs to achieve its objectives. The Schools and Maturity program is studying the effects of school, family, and peer group experiences on the development of attitudes consistent with psychosocial maturity. The objectives are to formulate, assess, and research important educational goals other than traditional academic achievement. The program has developed the Psychosocial Maturity (PSM) Inventory for the assessment of adolescent social, individual, and interpersonal adequacy. The School Organization program is currently concerned with authority-control structures, task structures, reward systems, and peer group processes in schools. It has produced a large-scale study of the effects of open schools, has developed the Teams-Games-Tournament (TGT) instructional process for teaching various subjects in elementary and secondary schools, and has produced a computerized system for school-wide attendance monitoring. The School Process and Career Development program is studying transitions from high school to postsecondary institutions and the role of schooling in the development of career plans and the actualization of labor marker outcomes.

This report, prepared by the Schools and Maturity program, is part of a series of studies of the criterion and construct validity of the Psychosocial Maturity Inventory.

ABSTRACT

This study investigates the relation between Psychosocial Maturity and a dimension of moral judgment. Form D of the Psychosocial Maturity Inventory and Form B of the Survey of Ethical Attitudes (SEA) were administered to 182 tenth grade students. Predicted negative correlations between SEA and two Social Adequacy subscales were marginally significant for male students and not significant for female students. A previous finding, that SEA scores are curvilinearly related to maturity, was not supported. Implications of the findings for developmental models of moral development are discussed.

Introduction

This study investigates the relationship between two recent psychometric devices--the Psychosocial Maturity Inventory (Greenberger & Sørensen, 1974; Greenberger, Josselson, Knerr, & Knerr, 1975) and the Survey of Ethical Attitudes (Hogan, 1973) as part of an ongoing attempt to provide evidence for the criterion and construct validity of the former instrument. The study was undertaken to answer the question: Does an individual's placement along a measure of Psychosocial Maturity (PSM) imply a statement about his or her moral posture in society? More specifically, does an individual's degree of maturity as measured by the PSM Inventory allow a prediction about his or her reasoning in explaining the compliance, or lack thereof, with the moral code of the society?

The Psychosocial Maturity Inventory

Considerable evidence now exists for the validity of the PSM Inventory developed by Greenberger et al. (1974). The scales of this Inventory, derived conceptually from a model of psychosocial maturity (Greenberger & Sørensen, 1974), measure nine attrubutes of maturity: Self-reliance, Identity, and Work Orientation--aspects of individual adequacy; Communication Skills, Knowledge of Major Roles, and Enlightened Trust--aspects of interpersonal adequacy; and Social Commitment, Tolerance, and Openness to Change--aspects of social adequacy. Greenberger et al. (1974) found that, as expected, PSM scores increase with age. Josselson, Greenberger, and McConochie (1974) found that all scales except Trust significantly differentiated students rated high on PSM-related traits

from students not rated high. Josselson et al. (1975), in a study of the divergent validity of the PSM subscales, found the individual adequacy subscales to be significantly correlated in the predicted direction with measures of self-esteem, anxiety, and neuroticism, while the other subscales were generally uncorrelated with these three measures.

In a criterion validity study, Bond et al. (1974) investigated the relationship between scores on the Social Adequacy (SA) subscales and a history of participation in social programs. They found that mean scores on the Social Adequacy subscales (Tolerance, Social Commitment, and Change) of student volunteers in social action programs were significantly higher than a control group of students who had never participated in such programs. Finally, Bond et al. (1975) examined the relationship between PSM measures and Dogmatism (Rokeach, 1960) in a sample of 11th graders, and, as predicted, obtained significant negative correlations between dogmatism and the three social adequacy subscales.

The Survey of Ethical Attitudes (SEA)

With the exception of measures of socialization (Gough, 1969) and Kohlberg's model of moral development (1964), psychologists have all but ignored the measurement of variables in the realm of morality. To the author's knowledge, the only models of moral conduct and moral character for which psychometric devices have been developed and employed in psychological research are those of Kohlberg (1964) and Hogan (1973). Hogan's model posits five conceptually orthogonal dimensions to describe moral character and explain moral conduct (see Hogan, 1973). Of specific concern here is the concept which Hogan calls the

"Ethics of Conscience and the Ethics of Responsibility" (Hogan, 1970). Briefly, the concept concerns questions of the following type: "To what kinds of considerations is appeal . . . made when the authority of the political and legal order and our obligations tc comply with its dictates is called into question [Olafson, 1961]?" Persons scoring toward the Ethics of Conscience end of the SEA scale (low) would argue that there are higher laws, unrelated to human legislation or the prescriptions of a given society, "which may be discovered by intuition and reason; a human law is just if, and only if, it corresponds to or can be derived from the higher laws" (Hogan, 1973, p. 224). Those scoring toward the Ethics of Responsibility end of the scale (high) deny the existence of "higher" laws. Rather, "laws and political institutions [are seen as] merely instruments for the realization of the common good; just laws are those which tend on the whole to maximize happiness."

Given, as Hogan points out, that there are eminent proponents of the ethics of conscience viewpoint (e.g., most American intellectuals) and equally eminent proponents of the ethics of responsibility viewpoint (e.g., Supreme Court Justice Frankfurter, H. L. A. Hart, and Walter Cronkite), the hypothesis that measures of psychosocial maturity could reliability predict placement along this dimension would seem unfounded. That is, public and literary figures who would be considered mature by any reasonable standard are to be found at both ends of this hypothetical continuum. Nevertheless, research with the SEA reveals several clearcut personality correlates of the disposition to adopt the ethics of conscience or responsibility.

A review of the personality correlates associated with this dimension of moral judgment (cf. Hogan, 1973) suggests the following general trend: Persons scoring low (toward the ethics of conscience) on the SEA tend to be independent, innovative, and open to change on the positive side; but mildly impulsive, opportunistic, and even "rebellious" on the negative side. By contrast, persons scoring high (toward the ethics of responsibility) tend to be seen as thoughtful, reasonable, and dependable, but also exhibit a tendency toward political conservatism and the syndrome of dispositions which this implies: conventionality, resistance to change, and respect for established law and authority. Thus, typically "conservative" experimental groups (e.g., policemen, ROTC seniors) were found to be significantly discriminable from control groups in their tendency to adopt the ethics of responsibility (Hogan, 1970).

While overall level of maturity may be linearly uncorrelated with scores on the SEA, individual subscales should show a pattern of relationships with SEA scores consistent with the constructs underlying the individual subscales. Thus, the specific prediction was that two Social Adequacy subscales (Tolerance and Openness to Sociopolitical Change) would correlate negatively with SEA scores. In addition, a finding by Hogan (1973, p. 229) that persons in the middle of the ethics of conscience-ethics of responsibility dimension are more mature than persons at either extreme was examined.

Method

The PSM Inventory and SEA[1] were administered in one testing session to 86 male and 96 female 10th grade students of an all white, middle-to-upper-middle class high school in suburban Erie, Pennsylvania. Students were told that the study was part of a larger, ongoing study to learn about the opinions and attitudes of young people on a wide variety of issues. Participation in the study was voluntary.

Previous research has shown that males and females differ in (1) the rate of psychosocial development, females typically maturing faster across PSM scales (McConochie, et al., 1974); and (2) in the pattern of covariation with other variables (Bond et al., 1975). The analyses were therefore performed separately for male and female students.

Results and Discussion

Table 1 shows the means and standard deviations for boys and girls on both instruments, along with the Individual Adequacy (IA) and Social Adequacy (SA) summary statistics.[2]

Insert Table 1 about here

Scores for female students are generally higher than those for males on the PSM scales. Of note is the fact that boys and girls do not differ on the SEA. Correlations between PSM scores and the

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[1] Form D of the PSM Inventory and Form B of the SEA were administered.

[2] The IA summary score is a simple additive composite of the Self-reliance, Identity and Work subscales. The SA score is an additive composite of the Social Commitment, Tolerance, and Openness to Change subscales.

SEA are presented in Table 2. With the exception of the Roles scale for females, these correlations are generally not significant or are marginally significant. The consistently low correlations do not contravene the notion that psychosocial maturity and placement along this dimension of moral judgment appear to be linearly unrelated phenomena.

Insert Table 2 about here

The predicted negative correlation between the Change and Tolerance subscales and the SEA was marginally significant for the male sample and near zero for the female group. The relatively large, highly significant positive correlation in the female sample between SEA and Knowledge of Roles allows no immediately obvious interpretation. This correlation is especially intriguing because the corresponding correlation in the male group (while not significant) is nevertheless in the opposite direction.

Table 3 shows the PSM means and standard deviations of those students who comprise roughly the middle 25th to 75th percentile on the PSM scale and those who comprise roughly the lower and upper quartiles. In no case were significant differences obtained between the two groups. Moreover, no significant differences were obtained even when the PSM subscale means of extreme scorers on SEA (i.e., the lowest five and highest four scorers) were compared with the PSM subscale means of the middle group. It would appear that, as measured by the Psychosocial Maturity Inventory, maturity is not curvilinearly related to SEA scores.

Insert Table 3 about here

Several authors have posited age-related, stage models of moral judgment (Piaget, 1964; Kohlberg, 1963, 1964). The latter author appears to view his sixth and last stage (corresponding to the ethics of conscience) as somehow "higher" developmentally than the fifth (corresponding to the ethics of responsibility). If "higher" is taken to mean more mature in some sense, then the present results would argue against viewing these two stages as developmentally distinct. Rather, with young adults (and presumably older adults as well) the tendency to adopt the ethics of responsibility or the ethics of conscience seems to imply little if anything about an individual's development as a mature social being.

Summary

This study investigates the relationship between subscales of the PSM Inventory and the Survey of Ethical Attitudes. The predicted negative correlation between scores on the Social Adequacy subscales of the PSM Inventory and scores on the SEA was marginally significant for the male sample and not significant for the female sample. An earlier finding by Hogan that extreme scorers on the SEA scales tend to be less mature than those scoring in the middle range was not replicated. Implications of the finding that PSM scores and SEA scores are unrelated are discussed.

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Table 1

Means and Standard Deviations of Male (M = 86) and Female (N = 96)

10th Grade Students on PSM Inventory and SEA

	Male		Female		t for Female-Male Difference
	$\bar{X}$	SD	$\bar{X}$	SD	
Self Reliance	2.98	.41	3.16	.46	+2.76
Identity	2.94	.47	2.91	.56	- .39
Work Orientation	2.82	.45	2.71	.52	-1.51
Comm. Skills	2.72	.43	2.75	.45	+ .46
Trust	2.68	.41	2.64	.42	- .42
Roles	3.05	.47	3.26	.35	+3.42
Soc. Commitment	2.96	.46	3.29	.36	+5.39
Openness to Change	2.95	.44	3.23	.35	+4.75
Tolerance	3.03	.46	3.17	.39	+2.21
IA	8.74	1.12	8.78	1.26	+ .22
SA	8.94	1.14	9.93	.83	+6.74
SEA	16.01	5.77	16.48	4.08	+ .64

Table 2

Correlations between PSM and SEA for Male (N = 86) and Female (N = 96) 10th Grade Students

	Correlation with SEA	
PSM Subscales	Male	Female
Self Reliance	.05	.07
Identity	.20	.11
Work	.05	.20*
Communication Skills	.25*	-.02
Trust	-.10	-.11
Roles	-.11	.37**
Social Commitment	-.02	.17
Openness to Change	-.20	.02
Tolerance	-.23*	-.18
IA	.11	.16
SA	-.22*	-.02

* $p < .05$

** $p < .001$

Table 3

Means and Standard Deviations on PSM Subscales

of 1st and 4th Quartile on SEA

and 2nd and 3rd Quartile on SEA*

	1st and 4th Quartile (N = 106)		2nd and 3rd Quartile (N = 79)	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
PSM Subscale				
Work	2.77	.49	2.75	.48
Self Reliance	3.09	.43	3.06	.47
Communication	2.75	.45	2.71	.43
Identity	2.94	.52	2.90	.51
Roles	3.19	.43	3.12	.42
Trust	2.68	.42	2.74	.41
Social Commitment	3.16	.45	3.10	.43
Tolerance	3.14	.44	3.19	.45
Change	3.18	.44	3.15	.45
IA	8.79	1.20	8.70	1.19
SA	9.44	1.09	9.39	1.11

*Quartile breaks were not exactly at the 25th and 75th percentile points (this accounts for the unequal N's of the two groups).